

MAYOR'S REPORT

MARCH 29, 2013

Spring is here, finally, after a near normal winter. We've been somewhat spoiled by the last two mild winters and this one has been tough on Berlin's snow removal budget. There will be no surplus from Public Works Department to help with this budget. Speaking of budgets, the current budget process the City Council is facing is one of the most difficult in the 20 years I have been serving Berlin. New Hampshire State Retirement System increases are in the double-digits, there is nearly \$400,000 less money coming to Berlin for state aid to education. To this point in the year we haven't been able to develop the surpluses necessary to avoid making the tough and very painful decisions. The City Manager's proposed FY 2014 budget eliminates six full time employees AND raises taxes by about \$4.00 per thousand. This obviously is an unacceptable tax increase, so the City Council collectively have our hands quite full. We will have to find a whopping \$1.9M to keep a level tax rate and keep people from getting laid off. Berlin needs Governor Hassan's proposed budget to pass intact if we have any hope of avoiding layoffs. Remember, your State Representatives speak for you. Contact them and let them know you support Governor Hassan's efforts. Berlin's reps are Representative Robert Theberge, Representative Gary Coulombe and Representative Yvonne Thomas.

On April 5th and 6th, members of the Berlin City Council, Berlin city staff members and outside experts will be interviewing the 5 remaining candidates for the City Manager's position. The new City Manager will be directly employed by the City of Berlin. Our current City Manager Pat MacQueen is actually an employee of Municipal Resources Inc. and the arrangement has served the city very well. The City Council agreed early in the recruitment process that we all wanted the new manager to be a direct hire. Though the MRI/Berlin partnership worked very well, there was never a formal contract. Pat has always been an employee at will. That was how he preferred to work and it allowed his true professionalism to shine. It is my goal to have an announcement by May 15th on who our new City Manager will be.

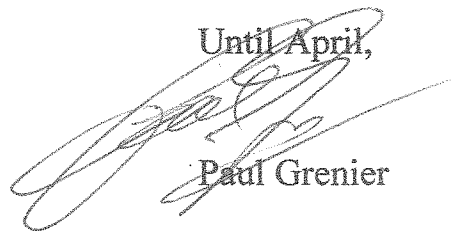
There has been some discussion within the community about the effects of removing the blighted housing. Specifically, when one gets torn down it is another that no longer pays taxes to the city. On the surface, that seems like a legitimate concern. Most of these buildings, however, haven't paid taxes to the

city in well over three years. Because of their state of disrepair, these buildings paid very little in taxes when they did pay, and the services they consumed from the city and schools often times far exceeded their tax revenue. We are already witnessing some positive effects, with the Board of Education spending less on special education this year than in years past. People who own homes deserve to be able to enjoy and improve their properties without living with the disturbing activities that occur from some of these buildings.

With the advent of Spring brings the summer activities. Motorcycles and bicycles will adorn our roadways so lets all be aware! Remember, it is illegal to have loud audio systems in cars and also to drive and text. Let's have some courtesy for others when using city streets and look out for children!! Speaking of streets, things are a bit sandy. PWD will only begin to pick up after the threat of snow disappears. If you're one that likes to clean up the sidewalks in front of your home, simply pile the sand in front of your home and call PWD. They will be happy to pick it up.

Finally, I was very proud of the BHS Mountaineers boys hockey team this season. Undefeated during the regular season, and losing in the finals in overtime is nothing to be ashamed of. To a man, they displayed sportsmanship, pride in themselves, and represented Berlin in the best possible light. Hockey is a team game, you win and lose as a team. That said, a tip of my hat goes to Senior Defenseman Jeff Oneil. Jeff logged a ton of ice time during his 4 year career at BHS. He played tough, always protected his teammates and anchored a really good defense corps. The fans in "Coach's Corner" always noticed and appreciated your 100% effort every time you wore the jersey...

Until April,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Grenier", written over a horizontal line.

Paul Grenier